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Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 61/195 of 20 December 2006. It provides an update on actions taken by Governments, organizations of the United Nations system and major groups in advancing implementation of sustainable development goals and targets, including through partnerships for sustainable development. The report also contains an overview of recent trends in implementation, a summary of the outcomes of intergovernmental bodies, and updates of ongoing inter-agency activities.

Some common features in implementation are emerging, facilitating ongoing efforts by all implementation actors to exchange lessons learned and best practices. Developing a vision and a strategic focus for sustainable development, adopting sustainable development principles to guide sector-specific plans, taking an integrated and holistic approach, with an emphasis on linkages and whole systems, ensuring broad participation in implementation, in particular by the stakeholders, and developing a practical focus on specific measures and corresponding criteria — these are some of the steps that Governments and other stakeholders have taken to expedite implementation. Member States, organizations of the United Nations system and major groups should stay on this implementation track while aiming for accelerated progress.

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I. Background

1. In its resolution 61/195 of 20 December 2006, the General Assembly called for the effective implementation of the commitments, programmes and time-bound targets adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development; reaffirmed the objective of strengthening the implementation of Agenda 21,[1] including through the mobilization of financial and technological resources, as well as capacity-building programmes, in particular for developing countries; and reiterated that the Commission on Sustainable Development was the high-level body responsible for sustainable development within the United Nations system and served as a forum for the consideration of issues related to the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, and called upon Governments to support the work of the Commission.

2. In this regard, the General Assembly reiterated its invitation to the relevant United Nations organizations, programmes and funds, the Global Environment Facility and international, regional, financial and trade institutions, within their mandates, to participate actively in the work of the Commission. The Assembly provided further guidance on the preparations for the fifteenth session of the Commission.

3. The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/195 to provide an update on progress in the implementation of that resolution. It should be read in conjunction with other reports submitted under the agenda item on sustainable development, including those related to the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, as well as the report on matters relating to small island developing States.

II. Overview

4. The present year marks the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development entitled *Our Common Future*[2] (also called the Brundtland report, after Gro Harlem Brundtland; the Chairperson of the Commission). Over the last two decades, the report has made significant contributions to raising the awareness of Governments, international organizations, and major groups, including industry and business, as well as the general public, with regard to the imperative need for making the transition towards sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development, defined in the report as development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs", shone a spotlight on a new dimension of development — equity and justice, between and within generations, and the responsibility to act accordingly.

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[1] *Report of the United Nations Conferences on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

[2] Oxford, United Kingdom, and New York, Oxford University Press, 1987; see also document A/42/427, annex.

5. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, integrated economic and social development and environmental protection into the concept of sustainable development. Through the principles contained in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development[3] and Agenda 21, the Conference highlighted the urgent need for addressing in an integrated and balanced manner the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development and provided both guidance and a blueprint for follow-up action.

6. The global conferences and review meetings held since Rio have reaffirmed the Rio principles and Agenda 21. In 2001, the General Assembly had decided that the World Summit on Sustainable Development should be convened in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002, to provide further momentum for achieving sustainable development. The Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development ("Johannesburg Plan of Implementation")[4] included time-bound goals and targets and placed a clear and strong emphasis on actions that would enable implementation at all levels. Previous reports submitted to the Assembly on follow-up to the Summit described progress in formulating and implementing national sustainable development strategies, in action by local authorities, in growing multi-stakeholder participation, including through partnerships between Governments and the business sector, and in education for sustainable development, among other areas. A sharper focus on addressing barriers and constraints and on finding solutions is fostering a culture of implementation at local, national, regional and international levels.

7. Some common features in implementation are emerging that have facilitated ongoing efforts by all implementation actors to exchange lessons learned and best practices. Among other actions, developing a vision and a strategic focus for sustainable development is often a key starting point in the process of implementation. As highlighted in recent reports to the General Assembly, national Governments have been formulating and implementing national sustainable development strategies to put in place a national strategic framework for guiding and coordinating implementation. Efforts to formulate and implement national sustainable development strategies, including through voluntary peer review exercises, are continuing in many countries. Profiles of national sustainable development strategies, including current status, are featured on the website of the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development (http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/natlinfo/natlinfo.htm).

8. In some instances, the principles of sustainable development have been applied to guide other national economic, social or sector development plans or strategies. China, for instance, applied the principles of sustainable development in formulating its eleventh five-year plan (2006-2010) and has since been striving for the building of a harmonious society and the protection of environmental and natural resources, while further advancing its economic growth. Just as China's remarkable progress in poverty reductions has contributed to global efforts to achieve the Millennium

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[3] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex I.

[4] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.

Development Goals, so will progress in sustainable development in China inspire and galvanize further action in implementation elsewhere.

9. In many countries, Governments have also applied the principles of sustainable development in guiding the formulation of sector strategies. For instance, in developing its agriculture sector, Jordan has taken into consideration the role of agriculture both in economic and social development and in protecting the country's natural resources. Jordan's National Strategy for Agricultural Development 2002-2010 considers both the current situation of the agricultural sector and its future under "status quo" and "development" scenarios. The Strategy then presents profiles of proposed projects in five subsectors, examining them through an integrated approach encompassing economic, social and environmental objectives, which sets out these objectives one by one.

10. In Bulgaria, sustainable land resources management is closely linked with the national environment strategy for 2005-2014. The Government has undertaken to establish legislative and regulatory frameworks for sustainable land resources management and capacity-building through a number of programmes and measures that address social, economic and environmental aspects of land management. Similarly, in Colombia, the Government has integrated the national action plan to combat drought and desertification into the national development plan for 2002-2010, addressing in an integrated manner issues of forests conservation, water management, restoration of river basins, and regional economic and social imbalances.

11. Taking an integrated and holistic approach, with an emphasis on linkages and whole systems, is another important step that can facilitate implementation. For instance, in Ghana, the Government has adopted the National Action Programme to Combat Desertification as a strategic planning framework for the protection and sustainable management of natural resources in deserts and areas affected by desertification. Rather than focus on deserts and areas affected by desertification alone, the Programme aims to implement environmentally sound, socially inclusive development programmes for drought-prone, semi-arid and arid areas, based on participatory mechanisms and on integration of poverty alleviation strategies and other sector programmes, including forestry, agriculture, water and health, into ongoing efforts to combat drought and desertification. Furthermore, learning from its recent implementation experience, the Government is mainstreaming the programme for combating drought and desertification into the country's poverty reduction strategies and national development planning framework.

12. Broad participation in implementation, in particular by the stakeholders, is also a key element in ensuring progress in implementation. In Croatia, for example, the Government developed the Croatian Plan for Agriculture and Rural Development (2005-2006) through an approach that entailed involving all the stakeholders in addressing simultaneously the economic, social and environmental dimensions of its agriculture and rural development. The implementation of the Plan has been based on a "bottom-up" approach, with investments of State, county, and local resources, as well as user fees, pooled together. There is active participation of local governments in the whole decision-making process. Such broad-based participation involving all stakeholders has helped to ensure that the Plan preserves and develops rural areas, as well as traditional features of Croatian agriculture, while promoting the production and marketing of food and agricultural products.

13. Developing a practical focus on specific measures and corresponding criteria has also helped move forward implementation. This results-oriented approach, often using indicators to measure progress, has been adopted to monitor implementation by an increasing number of implementation actors. For instance, in industry and business, a growing number of companies have appointed a "chief sustainability officer" not only to address environmental concerns but also to tackle specific issues such as safety, compliance and acquisition. In some instances, chief sustainability officers also have an increasingly larger say as regards products development and marketing.

14. Business consultancies have seized on this practical focus and have developed criteria to help companies achieve sustainable development. Deloitte Consulting, for instance, has used the following criteria to define sustainability of business practices: waste is reduced, eliminated or reused; net consumption of resources (capital, human or natural) for a specific product or service is reduced; the consumed resource is partially or completely replaced; the ratios of natural to man-made and organic to synthetic are increased; and the net global impact footprint is reduced.[5] Other economic, social and environmental criteria and indicators are being developed to foster sustainable business practices.

15. Developing a vision and a strategic focus for sustainable development, adopting sustainable development principles to guide sector-specific plans, taking an integrated and holistic approach, with an emphasis on linkages and whole systems, broad participation in implementation, in particular by the stakeholders, and developing a practical focus on specific measures and corresponding criteria — these are some of the steps that Governments and other stakeholders have taken to expedite implementation.

III. Actions at the intergovernmental level

16. At the intergovernmental level, deliberations in the Economic and Social Council in 2007 have focused on strengthening efforts at all levels to promote pro-poor sustained economic growth, including through equitable macroeconomic policies, and on strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development. The Commission on Sustainable Development at its policy session continued its thematic focus on energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution/atmosphere and climate change.

A. Economic and Social Council

17. During its 2007 substantive session held in Geneva from 2 to 27 July, the Economic and Social Council focused its thematic discussion on strengthening efforts at all levels to promote pro-poor sustained economic growth, including through equitable macroeconomic policies. The Council devoted its first annual ministerial review to strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development. The Council adopted a ministerial declaration in which Ministers reaffirmed that development is a central

[5] See http://www.deloitte.com/dtt/section_node/0,1042,sid%253D143146,00.html.

goal in and of itself and that sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental aspects constitutes a key element of the overarching framework of United Nations activities. Ministers also reiterated that eradicating poverty is the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in particular for developing countries.

18. Among other actions, Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to achieving the goal of sustainable development including through the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Ministers also reiterated that the eradication of poverty, hunger and malnutrition, particularly as they affected children, was crucial for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and that rural and agricultural development should be an integral part of national and international development policies. In this regard, they called for increased productive investment in rural and agricultural development in order that food security might be achieved and for enhanced support for agricultural development and trade capacity-building in the agricultural sector in developing countries.

19. Ministers further recognized the negative impact of environmental degradation and climate change on sustainable development in all countries, especially developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, and reaffirmed that responses to climate change should be coordinated with social and economic development in an integrated manner, with a view to avoiding an adverse impact on the latter, taking into full account the legitimate priority needs of developing countries for the achievement of sustained economic growth and the eradication of poverty.

B. Outcome of the fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

20. The fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which was held in New York from 30 April to 11 May 2007, was a policy session, focusing on the complex but important and interlinked issues of energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution/atmosphere and climate change. Over 100 Ministers and deputy Ministers, along with more than 2,000 participants, attended the session.

21. Delegates undertook extensive and sustained negotiations on the four thematic issues, along with cross-cutting issues, working late into the night. Although negotiations were to have concluded on Tuesday, 8 May, before the beginning of the high-level segment, they continued throughout the latter, involving Ministers from the European Union (EU) and the Group of 77 and China during the last day of the session.

22. Delegates achieved near unanimity on industrial development and air pollution/atmosphere, topics for which the issue of time-bound targets and timetables had not been raised. They also made significant progress on energy and climate change, including, notably, in the area of access to energy as essential for poverty eradication. Agreements reached *ad referendum* on climate change included accelerating the transition to a lower greenhouse gas emitting economy, a first in intergovernmental negotiations. A number of the measures and actions, agreed *ad referendum* as of Friday, 11 May built upon those contained in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

23. However, delegates remained divided on several key points. As a consequence, it was necessary for the Chairman to present a decision text for consideration by the Commission, reflecting text agreed *ad referendum* during the negotiations and the Chairman's best efforts to reconcile conflicting viewpoints in a fair and balanced manner. States members of the Group of 77 and China and the Alliance of Small Island States, as well as many other countries, accepted the Chairman's decision text. Germany, on behalf of States members of the European Union, as well as one country attending the session as an observer, rejected the text because agreement could not be reached particularly on time-bound targets for renewable energy, an international agreement on energy efficiency, the integration of energy policies into national planning by 2010, and a formal review arrangement for energy issues in the United Nations.

24. Despite the lack of a consensus decision text, the Commission achieved other, non-negotiated results. During the fifteenth session of the Commission, over 1,000 participants attended Learning Centre courses and Partnerships Fair activities, benefiting from Commission capacity-building activities; there were energetic discussions in the Partnerships Fair on how partnerships could contribute to improving access by the poor to modern energy. The large variety of intellectually stimulating side events and parallel events (more than 100 of such events were organized) enriched the session's programme of activities. The dynamic dialogue between Governments and major groups provided fresh perspectives from the civil society on the challenges ahead and actions required in the areas of energy, industry, air pollution and climate change. The round-table discussions during the high-level segment and the ministerial dialogue sessions were also well attended. The interactions between Ministers for energy and environment on energy and climate change were thought-provoking and highlighted the urgent need for intersectoral dialogue of decision makers. The dynamics of these dialogue sessions once again demonstrated the value added of the Commission as the only truly intergovernmental forum that deals with the linkages among the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

IV. Inter-agency cooperation and coordination

25. As an inter-agency network to help ensure coherence in the United Nations system's multidisciplinary response to decisions taken at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in the area of energy, UN-Energy has continued to serve as a gateway for sharing information, knowledge, experiences and good practices as well as initiatives in energy-related activities within the United Nations system. In 2007, UN-Energy issued the publication entitled "Sustainable bioenergy: A framework for decision makers", which seeks to structure the approach to the current discussions on bioenergy and represents one of the contributions of the organizations of the United Nations system to ongoing discussions on an important issue that needs further attention, analysis and valuation to enable appropriate trade-offs to be made and to ensure that the energy needs of people are met while, at the same time, the local and global environments are adequately protected.

26. Among other activities undertaken by UN-Energy were contributions to the fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development; various activities undertaken to implement projects designed to improve access to modern energy services, including in Africa; activities to promote renewable energy and energy

efficiency; and efforts to develop toolkits and other tools for policy integration, capacity-building and awareness-raising.

27. UN-Water continued its work within all aspects of water and sanitation in 2007. Starting from March 2007, representatives of UN-Water attended a series of meetings of the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation, updating the Advisory Board on UN-Water activities. UN-Water has also contributed to the preparatory activities of the International Year of Sanitation 2008 and implementation of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life": 2005-2015. Thanks to donor support, UN-Water has set up associated programmes in Zaragoza and Bonn in support of the International Decade and in Perugia in support of the World Water Assessment Programme.

28. In 2007, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have continued their coordination work in the context of the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production. Among other activities, the two organizations supported the Third International Expert Meeting on the 10-Year Framework of Programmes for Sustainable Consumption and Production, held in Stockholm from 26 to 29 June 2007. The meeting reviewed progress achieved since the Second International Expert Meeting, held in San José in September 2005, and presented for discussion a first draft outline of the 10-Year Framework. The Meeting also provided an opportunity to explore the issue of how to engage effectively major groups, including the business sector and non-governmental organizations, that are working on sustainable consumption and production programmes either within their organizations or in their countries. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), one of the three designated implementing partners of the Global Environment Facility, continued to draw extensively on its broad network of country offices to provide support to countries in the development of effective policies and institutions. This support includes integrating environmental and development objectives into national development agendas and processes to protect the environment as well as reduce poverty. Further details on UNDP cooperation with partners and its recent work are further outlined in the annex.

V. Regional activities

29. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), following its restructuring in August 2006, has established a Division on Food Security and Sustainable Development for servicing the Africa Committee on Sustainable Development and for implementing programme activities in support of sustainable development in Africa. In 2006, among other regional activities, the Commission released an issue of "Africa's sustainable development bulletin"; a publication entitled "National councils for sustainable development in Africa: a review of institutions and their functioning"; and the first issue of the "sustainable development report on Africa". The Commission also continued to implement programme activities under its subprogramme on fostering sustainable development in Africa, through working in the areas of transforming agriculture and rural economy for sustainable development, strengthening regional cooperation for sustainable development, preparing a report on the development and implementation of national strategies for sustainable development, and monitoring regional trends in sustainable development.

30. Through its work on sustainable development, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) aims to promote sustainable development in its member countries in line with Agenda 21 and to safeguard the environment and human health. ECE also seeks to reduce pollution and minimize environmental damage with a view to avoiding compromising environmental conditions for future generations. To this end, ECE has adopted a four-pronged approach which comprises:

(a) Bringing together Governments through the Committee on Environmental Policy to formulate environmental policy and support its implementation by organizing seminars, workshops and advisory missions and providing a forum for sharing experiences and good practices;

(b) Taking an active role in regional and cross-sectoral processes, especially the "Environment for Europe" ministerial process;

(c) Assessing the efforts of individual countries to reduce pollution and manage natural resources, including through environmental impact assessments, and making recommendations on how to improve environmental performance;

(d) Implementing the five environmental treaties negotiated under the Commission's auspices.

31. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) seeks to play a leadership role in guiding the Asian and Pacific region towards sustainable development through the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The main objectives of its programmes are to promote regional and subregional cooperation for sustainable development and to strengthen the national capacity of members and associate members in designing and implementing environment and sustainable development policies and strategies that would enable them to maximize the benefits derived from globalization. In implementing these programmes, ESCAP works with stakeholders to address environmental problems by integrating environmental policies into national economic goals. In addition, ESCAP promotes partnerships between the public and private sectors, and between government and civil society. It provides the crucial link in these multifaceted and dynamic development processes between the global and national levels.

32. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) seeks to promote, simultaneously, economic growth, social development and environmental protection in the region, with a view to achieving an integrated and balanced promotion of the three dimensions of sustainable development. In so doing, ECLAC seeks to translate the vision of sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean into effective public policy that addresses the main areas of its programme activities, taking into account the environmental problems in the region identified as priorities by Governments, the comparative advantages of ECLAC in promoting sustainable development in the region, and the role of other relevant actors, such as other organizations of the United Nations system, regional development banks and bilateral donors, with a view to avoiding duplication and enhancing the synergetic potentials among these organizations. Recently, ECLAC developed a programme of work to mainstream sustainable development in its activities, focusing on climate change, and activities linking energy, air pollution, transportation urban issues, natural disasters and industrial development, with activities in these areas carried out in close cooperation between ECLAC

substantive divisions and other regional organizations. In addition, ECLAC organized its Fiscal Policy and the Environment seminars together with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank and GTZ (Deutsche Gersellschaft für Technische Zusammen-arbeit).

33. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) monitors the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation in the region and assists member States in formulating, developing and implementing sustainable development policies. ESCWA also assists member States in introducing scientific and technological variables into socio-economic planning with a view to ensuring sustainable development. Recently, ESCWA organized the sixth session of the Committee on Energy and the seventh session of the Committee on Water Resources. During these sessions, delegates reviewed documents on the vision for and policies on energy, along with a five-year review of achievements on energy for sustainable development; they also discussed policy options for the implementation of integrated water resources management at national level and carried out a five-year review of progress achieved in the water sector. In addition, ESCWA conducted expert group meetings on energy for sustainable development, national institutional reforms for implementing integrated water resources management, and application of indicators and indices for water quality management. ESCWA is currently planning to organize a regional conference on land degradation issues in the Arab region.

34. In addition to conducting their regional and subregional activities, the five regional commissions also contributed to the policy discussions during the fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and its Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for the session. Representatives of the five regional commissions, as well as regional development banks and other regional institutions, addressed, from regional perspective, policy options and possible actions to expedite implementation in the four thematic areas of: energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution/atmosphere and climate change. The discussions were organized on a region-by-region basis with regional panellists making presentations followed by interactive dialogue with delegations. A summary of these discussions can be found in the report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on its fifteenth session.[6]

VI. Major groups

35. Major groups continue to contribute to the implementation of sustainable development on many levels, playing multiple roles as sustainable development advocates, implementers and stakeholders. Ranging from large international networks to small local community organizations, major groups utilize their expertise and knowledge to promote education in sustainable development, raise awareness of social, economic and environmental issues, and monitor progress towards the implementation of sustainable development.

36. Major groups also contribute to implementation through partnerships for sustainable development and by launching their own initiatives. For example, many

[6] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2007, Supplement No. 9* (E/2007/29).

local authorities are now setting emissions reduction standards for their cities, complementing national efforts to reduce the levels of greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change. Business and industry groups are actively engaged in contributing to the development of partnerships aimed at improving access to energy, especially in rural areas. Many case studies on the thematic cluster for the present implementation cycle were added during the current year to the Commission secretariat's online case studies for sustainable development database[7] for this thematic cycle; these case studies shared examples of successful investments that supported the sustainable development of local communities. Women are recognized as particularly important stakeholders in efforts to overcome challenges related to access to energy and energy efficiency.

37. Building on the outcomes of the review year, major groups were also engaged in the work of the fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which included many opportunities for contributions by major groups, including during the Commission's Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting. Major groups were invited by the Commission to share their views on policy options and possible actions to overcome key constraints and obstacles related to energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution/atmosphere and climate change.

38. For the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting, major groups prepared papers outlining their priorities for action relevant to the thematic cluster. In keeping with the practice established since the eleventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, an integrated approach was maintained during the thematic discussions held throughout the meeting, with each segment including at least 2 interventions, amounting to a total of 54 interventions by major groups, including comments on the Chair's first draft of the negotiating document and closing remarks during the final plenary meeting. More than 100 individuals representing 45 organizations took part in the Meeting.

39. More than 700 representatives from 117 organizations participated in the Commission's fifteenth session. An interactive discussion with major groups held on the first day addressed major groups' proposals on practical measures and actions relevant to the thematic cluster of issues. During the high-level segment, major groups participated in two ministerial round tables and engaged in an interactive discussion with Ministers that outlined major groups' aspirations and priorities for action. A total of 63 interventions were made by major groups during this session.

40. Both the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting and the fifteenth session of the Commission maintained the level of full engagement of major groups in the work of the Commission, and major groups welcomed especially the variety of opportunities provided to them whereby they could interact with experts and delegates in thematic discussions. The continued efforts to enhance major groups' participation in the work of the Commission have made it possible for experts from major groups to serve as panellists in thematic discussions and to participate in all thematic, regional and small island developing States-related discussions. Major groups also actively participated in the Partnerships Fair and side events for both meetings, as well as in the Learning Centre held during the fifteenth session. Overall, the inputs and active participation of major groups added significant value to the outcome of this two-year cycle.

[7] Accessible on the Internet at http://webapps01.un.org/dsd/caseStudy/public/Welcome.do.

VII. Partnerships for sustainable development

41. Voluntary multi-stakeholder partnerships working towards sustainable development goals have proved to be an important complementary outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and a viable implementation mechanism. Partnerships continue to deliver results on the ground. They have proved to be a useful and credible vehicle for effecting change by catalysing government action, engaging a wide range of stakeholders and creating new, innovative models for implementation of sustainable development goals and commitments. As of July 2007, a total of 330 such initiatives had been registered with the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development, an increase of 63 per cent in registration since the Summit.

42. Partnerships for sustainable development have a special character: they are specifically linked to the implementation of globally agreed commitments in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, Agenda 21 and/or the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21.[8] As stressed at the Summit, these partnerships are not a substitute for government responsibilities and commitments; they are intended to strengthen implementation by involving all those stakeholders who can make a contribution to sustainable development.

43. The Commission on Sustainable Development had been designated by the World Summit as the focal point for discussion on partnerships that promote sustainable development. At its eleventh session in 2003, the Commission stressed that partnerships in the context of the Summit process and its follow-up should be developed and implemented in accordance with a set of agreed criteria and guidelines. The Commission agreed that information on partnerships for sustainable development should be made publicly available. As part of this information-sharing process, the Commission requested the secretariat to make information on partnerships available through a database accessible to all interested parties.

44. In February 2007, the Commission on Sustainable Development Partnerships website was further redesigned to add more relevant content, increase user-friendliness, improve navigation and enable easier access to partnerships-related information resources. New features added to the website included sections on partnerships news, new partnership registrations, partnerships updates, registration and updating procedures as well as searchable listings of web links, publications and events. The Partnerships website aims at assisting and facilitating the identification of partnerships' activities and their contributions to implementation by making available a wide array of practical information ranging from details on how to register new partnerships with the Commission secretariat, and information on upcoming partnerships-related meetings, to recent publications on registered partnerships and detailed guidelines and programme of activities at the Commission's Partnerships Fairs. These documents are available for download at the Partnerships website.

45. In May 2007, at the fifteenth session of the Commission, the Commission secretariat organized a Partnerships Fair to provide an opportunity for registered initiatives to showcase progress, network with existing and potential partners, create synergies between partnerships and learn from each other's experiences. The

[8] General Assembly resolution S-19/2, annex.

Partnerships Fair also gave participants at the session an opportunity to gather information on, and discuss the important contribution of partnerships towards, supporting the implementation of sustainable development. Launching and registering new partnerships were particularly encouraged. The programme of activities included partnerships information desks and "partnerships in practice" interactive discussion sessions. These sessions were organized by the Commission secretariat to generate an open dialogue on practical issues related to the implementation of sustainable development through partnerships as well as maximize opportunities for participants at the fifteenth session to raise questions, identify challenges and share information on lessons learned and best practices.

46. In keeping with the Commission's 2007 policy-year focus on practical measures and options to expedite implementation of commitments, the interactive discussions at the Partnerships Fair offered an important opportunity to highlight on-the-ground experiences from partnership practitioners. Partnerships activities were also organized in February/March 2007 at the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for the fifteenth session of the Commission. The Commission secretariat produced several online summary publications containing brief reports of the daily activities during both the Meeting and the annual session of the Commission (available from http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd15/PF/CSD-15_PF_programme.htm).

47. The fifteenth session of the Commission also marked the launch of the first session of the Partnership e-Forum aimed at fostering communication and strategic alliances between registered Commission partnerships through the sharing of best practices, exchange of lessons learned, and follow-up on meetings, conferences and publications.

48. Over the years, partnerships for sustainable development launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development have continued to develop, grow and consolidate. New partnerships have also continued to be launched and to be registered with the Commission secretariat. By collaborating across all levels, pooling skills and resources, developing innovative policy, technical and financing solutions to overcoming barriers to sustainable development, Commission partnerships continue to demonstrate their impact on, and concrete contributions to, the implementation of internationally agreed sustainable development goals and commitments. At the same time, these initiatives are evolving by taking on new partners and building alliances with other partnerships working in complementary areas.

VIII. Conclusions and recommendations

49. **Updates in this report show that implementation of sustainable development principles, goals and policies is continuing at all levels. Some common features in implementation are emerging, facilitating ongoing efforts by all implementation actors to exchange lessons learned and best practices. Developing a vision and a strategic focus for sustainable development; adopting sustainable development principles to guide sector-specific plans; taking an integrated and holistic approach, with an emphasis on linkages and whole systems; ensuring broad participation in implementation, in particular by the stakeholders; and developing a practical focus on specific measures and corresponding criteria — these are some of the steps that Governments and**

other stakeholders have taken to expedite implementation. Member States, organizations of the United Nations system and major groups should stay on this implementation track while aiming for accelerated progress.

50. **To that end, it is recommended that the General Assembly:**

(a) **Call on Governments, organizations of the United Nations system and major groups to continue expediting progress in implementation by exchanging lessons learned and best practices and, to this end, invite the Commission to continue improving its methods of work with a view to facilitating such exchanges;**

(b) **Call on Governments to continue providing their support to the Commission on Sustainable Development and to organize intersessional activities, taking into account the thematic cluster of issues to be considered by the Commission in 2008/2009 and, in this regard, to contribute to the Commission's trust fund in support of enhanced participation of representatives of developing countries and representatives of major groups in the work of the Commission;**

(c) **Invite the United Nations System Chief Executive Board for Coordination to continue monitoring, through the High-level Committee on Programmes, the operational efficiency and effectiveness of inter-agency collaborative mechanisms, including UN-Energy, UN-Water and other collaborative arrangements, in the follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development;**

(d) **Call upon donor Governments and international financial institutions to increase official development aid to developing countries in the thematic areas of agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa.**

Annex

Contribution by the United Nations Development Programme

1. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) continues to promote the vital role of environment and energy in achieving the long-term goal of sustainable development. According to data collected under the UNDP multi-year funding framework, the Programme disbursed $950 million under environment and energy service lines during the period 2004-2006. Spending increased 30 per cent during the period, from $269 million in 2004 to $350 million in 2006. Of all environmental resources spent by UNDP during the period 2004-2006, about 28 per cent ($262 million) was spent on frameworks and strategies for sustainable development, 28 per cent ($263 million) on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and 20 per cent ($188 million) on access to sustainable energy services. These three areas accounted for three quarters of all UNDP spending on environment and energy. Smaller amounts were spent on effective water governance ($108 million), controlling the emissions of ozone-depleting substances and persistent organic pollutants ($67 million) and sustainable land management ($49 million).

Frameworks and strategies for sustainable development

2. UNDP work under the category of "Frameworks and strategies for sustainable development" facilitates country-driven integration of environment sustainability into key national development frameworks, including poverty reduction strategies. A total of 84 countries were engaged in this service line in 2006, and 34 per cent of all environmental outcomes (96 of 282) reported by country offices were associated with this service line.

3. UNDP has been supporting capacity-building efforts to mainstream environment in national, regional and local-level development plans. Rwanda, for example, has worked to ensure that environment concerns are adequately reflected in its Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy and District Development Plans, which involved training on environmental management tools, including strategic environmental assessment.

4. UNDP has a leadership role in developing strategic environmental assessment as an approach for mainstreaming environmental sustainability into policies, plans and programmes and co-led the preparation of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) guidance on applying strategic environmental assessment. During the last few years, UNDP has increased its assistance to countries in applying strategic environmental assessment to improve the quality of their planning processes: UNDP supported 5 countries in this area in 2005 and 11 countries in 2006. Ghana used strategic environmental assessment processes to mainstream dryland development issues in district-level planning, and the Islamic Republic of Iran developed a national strategic environmental assessment framework that is being applied to its energy sector. UNDP is committed to a more systematic application of strategic environmental assessment both internally and in its partner countries.

5. A number of country offices have supported national sustainable development strategies. These efforts have focused on strengthening sustainable development strategies through analysing needs, developing capacities, enhancing national ownership and ensuring alignment with national programmes and priorities that contribute to the achievement of poverty reduction strategy paper goals and the implementation of various environmental conventions.

6. Countries do best when they adopt the principles of sustainable development and, whenever necessary, adapt these principles to national priorities. Significantly more countries are adapting Millennium Development Goal targets to national conditions and priorities and aligning them in their national development.

Water and sanitation

7. One area of UNDP's work is effective water governance, which entails incorporating water issues into national development frameworks, improving access of poor populations to adequate water supply and sanitation, and promoting transboundary dialogue on regional water issues. UNDP disbursed at least $108 million in the area of water management during this period and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) alone funded international waters projects in scores of countries in 2006.

8. As regards national strategies for the equitable management and governance of water, UNDP has during the period 2004-2006 focused on integrating water resources management and water supply and sanitation into national development frameworks and building capacities for implementation. For example, UNDP assisted countries to develop national integrated water resources management (IWRM) strategies and continues to provide support in more than 50 other countries, including all small island developing States, for achieving the water-related Millennium Development Goals. Capacity development is priority and UNDP has established capacity-building networks such as Cap-Net, which comprises 11 national and 9 regional water management capacity-building networks, including 300 member institutions.

9. Regarding the local management of water supply, sanitation and water resources, UNDP has focused on promoting decentralized water management that is responsive to local conditions and the needs of poor and marginalized groups. UNDP has helped communities take an active role in integrated water resources management and promoted safe and ecosystem-based water supply and sanitation systems and technologies, including support to Chad, China, Kenya, the Sudan, Ukraine and others in conceiving national plans, tariff structures, legislation and regulatory systems for water and sanitation. UNDP supported community-level projects on water resources management, water supply and sanitation in over 30 countries. In India and Sri Lanka, the success of pilot projects in ecologically friendly sanitation elicited demands from municipal and State Governments to scale up sanitation services. A broad-based programme to implement "eco-friendly" municipal sanitation in Mexico has helped local organizations design and manufacture "ecosan" toilets and demonstrated the viability of successful household and public "ecosan" systems.

10. Gender equity and women's empowerment are central to water-resources management and, in this regard, foster human development for both women and

men. UNDP has produced tools such as "Mainstreaming gender in water management: a resource guide", an interactive web- and CD-ROM-based guide in four languages, and "Why gender matters", a tutorial for water managers, available in English and Spanish.

11. Adaptation to climate change is a cross-cutting area related to many others. During this period, UNDP supported the development of more than 200 individual national communications on climate change and adaptation, 29 national adaptation programmes of actions; and 22 pilot projects on adaptation in 43 countries, all of which have considerable relevance to water.

12. Finally, in the area of transboundary water management, UNDP continues to play an important role in strengthening the joint management of transboundary water bodies — rivers, lakes and aquifers that cross national borders — by setting priorities, building consensus on governance reforms and investments, nurturing and strengthening institutions, and supporting the implementation of action programmes. UNDP results here include support to transboundary waters management programmes in 15 lake and river basins in over 100 countries. Support includes the development and implementation of strategic action programmes and institutional development for transboundary water management.

Sustainable energy services

13. Sustainable energy services is a sector that has grown substantially in recent years with a focus on (a) strengthening national policy frameworks, (b) increasing rural energy access, (c) promoting clean technologies and (d) increasing access to investment financing for sustainable energy.

14. Since the Millennium Development Goals were adopted, over half of the Programme's energy-related projects and financing have dealt with expanding energy access to the poor. The main drivers of this growth are the Programme's three regional energy programmes, which aim to share lessons learned from national programmes and experiences and upscale country-level actions, while encouraging cooperative action through the consolidation of political commitments at the regional level. In Africa, for example, UNDP has been providing technical and financial support to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in an effort to help mainstream energy considerations into the region's development strategies. With the help of UNDP, ECOWAS has committed to an ambitious regional scale-up strategy, setting itself the target of increasing access to modern energy services fourfold within rural and urban areas by 2015.

15. UNDP continues to play an important role in helping countries transition to more sustainable energy systems. The UNDP Global Environment Facility (GEF) programme is the major force in this area. The majority of UNDP/GEF projects deal with promoting more environmentally sustainable energy systems — through improved energy efficiency and adoption of renewable energy technologies — and addressing climate-related energy challenges. The Facility's Small Grants Programme also plays an important role, particularly with regard to building capacity at the community level for increasing energy access by the poor.

16. Increasing access to investment financing for sustainable energy remains a challenge. In this regard, UNDP is working with developing countries and

economies in transition to explore financing opportunities that would help them accelerate the transition to more sustainable energy systems. The MDG Carbon Facility, announced in December 2005, is the latest contribution of UNDP to this effort. Its objective is to bridge the gap between the world of carbon and the world of the Millennium Development Goals.

Sustainable land management

17. Sustainable land management covers the sustainability of agriculture, forest and rangelands, and aims to enhance the resilience and sustainability of livelihood of farmers, herders and other users of natural resources. The objective of UNDP work in this sector is to promote a change from standard "land management" to "sustainable land management". Decades of rural development have resulted in strategies that have skewed land-use patterns towards maximizing benefits in one sector while inadvertently creating costs in another sector. These costs have translated into land degradation, desertification, deforestation, excessive nutrient pollution and salinization, environmental refugees and forced migration, poverty and marginalization of minorities (indigenous peoples, pastoralists) and women in respect of local decision-making and control over land and natural resource assets. Rates of land degradation, depending on its severity, are estimated to have reached 10-30 per cent worldwide.

18. The UNDP Drylands Development Centre has developed capacities through the Integrated Drylands Development Programme resulting in the mainstreaming of drylands issues and priorities into national policies, development planning frameworks, poverty reduction strategies and budgetary systems in 19 countries in sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States.

Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity

19. The work of UNDP in the area of biodiversity has supported capacity development, knowledge management, policy advice and advocacy. A total of 53 UNDP country offices supported outcomes related to this area in 2006. Most conservation organizations are increasingly linking biodiversity conservation issues to human well-being and the Millennium Development Goals. Significant improvement has been made in the area of understanding and making the economic case for biodiversity and ecosystem service protection. Better methods for assessing and monitoring the state of global biodiversity and ecosystem services have been developed. Community perspectives on biodiversity conservation and sustainable use have had a notable impact on global and national policies.

20. Through global advocacy and analysis, the UNDP Biodiversity Global Programme has assisted developing countries and communities in influencing national and global policies, benefiting from knowledge on biodiversity, and advancing their sustainable development and poverty reduction goals. UNDP has also worked to help empower Governments and local communities with respect to better managing biodiversity and the ecosystem services that it provides. Global advocacy and analysis on behalf of local communities with respect to shaping the enabling environment have been achieved through the Equator Initiative, which awarded the Equator Prize in 2004 and 2006 in recognition of outstanding

community efforts to reduce poverty through the conservation of biodiversity. The Equator Initiative also set up and hosted six "community dialogue spaces" designed to: share local knowledge and learning among communities, non-governmental organizations and Governments; inform decision makers and policy processes; and develop the capacity of local leaders and communities in their efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

21. At the local community level, the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme has supported community-based approaches through grants of up to $50,000. To date, more than 3,000 biodiversity-related projects of local non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations in over 80 countries have been funded, with funding totalling over $58 million.

Control of ozone-depleting substance and persistent organic pollutants

22. Within this area, UNDP supports countries in developing national and sectoral policies to better control chemicals. A global initiative, the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, has encouraged the incorporation of the sound management of chemicals into development planning processes. Given its cross-cutting nature, the sound management of chemicals is relevant in all sectors of society and contributes to the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals, while weak management can impede their achievement. Under this service line, UNDP is working to help incorporate sound management of chemicals into national development planning processes by focusing on its cross-sectoral applications.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation

23. UNDP has also supported a significant amount of work related to climate change mitigation and adaptation. The Programme is the implementing agency for national adaptation programme of action projects in 30 least developed countries designed to develop country-wide programmes encompassing immediate and urgent adaptation activities for addressing the current and anticipated adverse effects of climate change and extreme events. Of the 30 countries, 7 (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burundi, Kiribati, Malawi, the Niger and Samoa) have submitted their completed programme of action documents to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Of those countries still preparing the programmes of action, six are expected to complete and submit them to the Convention secretariat in early 2007, while the remainder are expected to complete the process in 2008.

24. In 2006, UNDP supported 14 least developed countries in producing draft national adaptation programmes of action, increasing the number at or beyond the draft stage to 16. Follow-up programme of action projects in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, the Niger and Samoa are currently in development. In Bhutan, glacial lake outburst risks are being reduced through (a) improving policies at national and provincial levels, (b) building capacities through flood early warning systems and (c) lowering lake water levels in high-risk areas. In 2007, UNDP will follow up with projects in another 10 least developed countries.

25. Also in 2006, 52 countries received approval for Second National Communication project proposals, supported by UNDP. Awareness of opportunities for integrating climate change risks into national development plans has grown through this process. Albania, for example, leveraged this process so as to develop a Global Environment Facility project proposal for integrating climate change risks in disaster planning and water management.

26. It is estimated that 40 per cent of development assistance could be affected by climate change. UNDP has been involved in climate change adaptation since the early 1990s when it helped developed the Adaptation Policy Framework to assist in translating vulnerability and adaptation studies into adaptation policies. In the context of the recently established Special Climate Change Fund and Least Developed Countries Fund managed by the Global Environment Facility and the recent allocations of official development assistance (ODA) and proceeds from the Clean Development Mechanism specifically for adaptation, the world community can make concerted efforts in terms of adapting to climate change.